THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI ANANTH KUMAR): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. During 1996-97, the total international passenger traffic handled in the country was 122,09,816, out of which Gujarat accounted for just 1,00,802 passengers (0.83%).

(c) and (d) Indian Airlines operates 7 weekly flights to Kuwait, Muscat & Sharjah from Ahmedabad at present. Airports Authority of India has also taken up upgradation/expansion of runway, apron & associated works at Ahmedabad airport to make it suitable for the operation of B-747 type of aircraft and tenders are likely to be invited by August, 1998.

Improvement in Designs of Ageing Aircrafts

601. DR. MOHAN BABU: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether any project has been undertaken to improve the designs of the ageing aircraft to extend their life; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI ANANTH KUMAR): (a) and (b) No, Sir. The Civil registered aircraft operated in India are maintained as per the guidelines issued by the DGCA. The manufacturers' requirements on ageing aircraft such as Corrosion Prevention and Control Programme (CPCP) and Supplementary Structural Inspection Programme (SSIP) are carried out by the operators in addition to structural modifications issued by the manufacturers from time to time to ensure structural integrity to maintain the old aircraft. This programme takes care of continued airworthiness of the aircraft throughout its service life.

Demand and Availability of Seats in Airlines

602. SHRI RAJNATH SINGH SURYA: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) how many seats are in demands by the passengers in the country every day;

(b) what are the availability of such seats airlines-wise every day; and

(c) in case of gap in what way Government propose to fill it?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI ANANTH KUMAR): (a) to (c) The average number of passengers carried and the availability of seats per day are as follows:

	Availability	Passengers carried
Indian Airlines (including Alliance Air)	28,850	19,274
Jet Airways	16,400	11,600
Sahara India Airlines	3,266	1,536
Archna Airways	102	87

In the civil aviation field, supply creates the demand. Various steps are being taken to encourage the growth of the airlines so as to enhance the availability of air transport facilities in areas which are un-served or under-served presently.

Financial Performance of AI

603. SHRI YERRA NARAYANASWAMY: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the financial performance of Air India was below par in the financial year 1996-97 and 1997-98;

(b) whether any in house survey of audit been done of the potential lapses of top management in this regard;

(c) if so, details of these findings;

(d) what were the causes of Air India's poor services and image during the financial year 1996-97 and 1997-98;

(e) whether responsibility being fixed on the personnel associated with this down-slide; and

(f) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI ANANTH KUMAR): (a) the financial performance of Air India for the years 1996-97 and 1997-98 is as under:—

Year	Loss (Rs. in crores)
1996-97	296.94
1997-98	280.43 (Provisional)

(b) to (f) Performance of Air India is reviewed periodically by the Management and the Board of Air India. The reviews have revealed that losses were incurred by the airline due to increase in expenditure on account of interest and depreciation on new aircraft, reduction in yield due to increased competition and cost of operations, increased landing, handling and navigational charges, agitation by engineers, depreciation of rupee value, etc.

Air India has taken following steps to reduce losses:—

(i) Network Rationalisation and consolidation.

(ii) Product upgradation

(iii) Improvement in on-time performance.

(iv) Creation of independent cost/profit centres.

Government have also constituted a committee of experts under the Chairmanship of Dr. Vijay Kelkar, Chairman, Tariff Commission to undertake a comprehensive examination of the reasons for the losses incurred by the Air India and to suggest strategies for turning around the company.

Development of Air Strip Near Raichur

604. DR. Y. LAKSHMI PRASAD: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to develop the air strip near Raichur into a full fledged airport in view of public demand and faster growth of the city;

(b) whether Government would also link Raichur with Hyderabad to improve transport facilities; and

(c) if so, the target set up for this purpose and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI ANANTH KUMAR): (a) There is no proposal at present to develop an airport at Raichur.

(b) and (c) Question does not arise.

Construction of Domestic and International Airport at Guwahati

605. DR. ARUN KUMAR SARMA: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) the amount allocated for the construction of the International Airport at Guwahati and the present status of the construction work of the airport;

(b) the constraints faced by the Airport Authority of India in execution and timely completion of the construction of terminal building of the domestic airport and the actions initiated by the Ministry in this regard; and

(c) the status of progress of construction of terminal building and runway of Lilabari airport Assam and time by which is scheduled to complete?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI ANANTH KUMAR): (a) An amount of Rs. 100 crores has been earmarked in the 9th Five Year Plan for upgradation of infrastructure facilities at Guwahati airport. The detailed estimates are being prepared and work is likely to be completed during the 9th Plan period.

(b) The progress of the work relating to modification of existing domestic terminal building was interrupted due to the fact that CPWD, the agency for project management on behalf of AAI, had to change the contractor as the work done was not satisfactory. Disturbed conditions